

**CLAIM AMENDMENTS**

1. (previously presented): A process for preparing an  $\alpha$ -aminonitrile with enhanced optical purity which process comprises  
contacting a mixture of the enantiomers of a chiral  $\alpha$ -aminonitrile with an acylase selective for one of the enantiomers,  
wherein said mixture is in the N-formyl form so that one of the enantiomers of the said  $\alpha$ -aminonitrile is selectively deformylated to obtain the unprotected corresponding unprotected  $\alpha$ -aminonitrile.
- 2-3. (canceled)
4. (previously presented): The process of claim 1, wherein the acylase is a peptide deformylase having a bivalent metal ion cofactor from group 5-11 of the periodic system.
5. (previously presented): The process of claim 4, wherein the peptide deformylase is of the class EC 3.5.2.27 or EC 3.5.1.31.
6. (previously presented): The process of claim 4, wherein the peptide deformylase contains the sequences (I) HEXXH, (ii) EGCLS and (iii) GXGXAAXQ.
7. (previously presented): The process of claim 4, wherein the peptide deformylase is from *Escherichia coli*.
8. (previously presented): The process of claim 4, wherein the bivalent metal is Fe, Ni, Mn or Co.
9. (previously presented): The process of claim 8, wherein the bivalent metal is Ni.
10. (previously presented): The process of claim 1, which further comprises adding a stabilisation agent.

11. (previously presented): The process of claim 10 wherein the stabilisation agent is catalase.

12. (currently amended): The process of ~~claim 4~~ claim 8, wherein the bivalent metal is Fe.

13-21. (canceled)